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ADEQ Director Owens Announces Text-Message Alerts for High Pollution Advisories

PHOENIX (Nov. 20, 2007) – Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) Director Steve Owens announced today that Valley residents can now get the first word on ADEQ High Pollution Advisory (HPA) alerts with the department's new text messaging service.

People who sign up for the service will receive a text message on their cell phone or small message service (SMS) wireless device by midafternoon the day before the HPA is issued. ADEQ charges no fee for this service, but fees set under your cell phone or wireless device plan will apply. People interested in receiving the text messages can sign up for the service at <http://www.azdeq.gov/sms.html>.

"This will help us get the word out about HPAs much more quickly and to a much wider group of people," Owens said. "This will be especially helpful for people working in construction, landscaping and agriculture that may not have e-mail access during the day and who will need to adjust their work activities because of an HPA."

Under legislation passed earlier this year -- during HPAs for particulate matter -- most recreational off-road vehicle use, residential wood burning and outdoor fires are banned in vehicle emission Area A (greater Phoenix). In addition, ADEQ asks that children and adults with respiratory problems avoid outdoor activities and that the general public limit outdoor activity throughout the day. Employers participating in the Valley's Trip Reduction Program should implement their pollution reduction action plans and all Valley residents should reduce emissions by taking steps such as car pooling and using mass transit.

Owens also said that the new service will be a way to get information to parents, teachers and school officials so that they can make decisions about children's outdoor activities when an HPA has been announced. "This is another tool we can use to keep our children safe and healthy," Owens said.

HPAs are also publicized through highway road signs in cooperation with the Arizona Department of Transportation. ADEQ has also made e-mail alerts available for several years. Sign up for them at <http://www.azdeq.gov/subscribe.html>.

The Phoenix area did not meet federal air quality health standards set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency from 2004-06 and a plan has been developed to reduce emissions by 5 percent each year to meet those health standards by 2010.